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Occupational Employment and Wages in Fort Smith, May 2014

Workers in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$16.92 in May 2014, about 25 percent below the nationwide average of \$22.71, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were lower than their respective national averages in 21 of the 22 major occupational groups; local wages for the farming, fishing, and forestry occupational group were not measurably different from the national average.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 3 of the 22 occupational groups, including production; transportation and material moving; and installation, maintenance, and repair. Conversely, 12 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including business and financial operations; computer and mathematical; and office and administrative support. (See [table A](#) and [box note](#) at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2014

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			
	United States	Fort Smith		United States	Fort Smith	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾	
Total, all occupations.....	100.0%	100.0%		\$22.71	\$16.92	*	-25
Management.....	5.0	3.6	*	54.08	45.45	*	-16
Business and financial operations.....	5.1	2.8	*	34.81	27.17	*	-22
Computer and mathematical.....	2.8	0.9	*	40.37	28.40	*	-30
Architecture and engineering.....	1.8	0.8	*	39.19	30.63	*	-22
Life, physical, and social science.....	0.8	0.3	*	33.69	23.81	*	-29
Community and social service.....	1.4	1.2	*	21.79	18.52	*	-15
Legal.....	0.8	0.4	*	48.61	38.10	*	-22
Education, training, and library.....	6.2	5.4	*	25.10	19.45	*	-23
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.3	0.6	*	26.82	19.38	*	-28
Healthcare practitioners and technical.....	5.8	5.7		36.54	30.25	*	-17
Healthcare support.....	2.9	3.3		13.86	11.08	*	-20
Protective service.....	2.4	2.3		21.14	15.62	*	-26
Food preparation and serving related.....	9.1	9.1		10.57	8.84	*	-16
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance.....	3.2	2.6	*	12.68	10.76	*	-15
Personal care and service.....	3.1	3.0		12.01	9.58	*	-20
Sales and related.....	10.5	10.0	*	18.59	13.98	*	-25
Office and administrative support.....	16.0	15.0	*	17.08	14.19	*	-17

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2014 - Continued

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			
	United States	Fort Smith		United States	Fort Smith		Percent difference ⁽¹⁾
Farming, fishing, and forestry.....	0.3	0.8		12.09	11.62		-4
Construction and extraction.....	3.9	4.2		22.40	17.83		-20
Installation, maintenance, and repair.....	3.9	4.5	*	21.74	18.08	*	-17
Production.....	6.6	13.1	*	17.06	14.23	*	-17
Transportation and material moving.....	6.8	9.6	*	16.57	14.85	*	-10

⁽¹⁾ A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in Fort Smith is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

Note: * The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.

One occupational group—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Fort Smith had 14,890 jobs in production, accounting for 13.1 percent of local area employment, more than double the 6.6-percent national share. However, the local average hourly wage for this occupational group was \$14.23, significantly below the national average of \$17.06.

With employment of 1,470, team assemblers was one of the largest occupations within the production group, as were meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (1,430) and production worker helpers (1,370). Among the higher paying jobs were first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, as well as metal and plastic computer-controlled machine tool operators, with mean hourly wages of \$22.23 and \$20.34, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were slaughterers and meat packers (\$8.81) and laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$9.23). (Detailed occupational data for the production occupational group are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_22900.htm.)

Location quotients allow us to explore the occupational make-up of a metropolitan area by comparing the composition of jobs in an area relative to the national average. (See [table 1](#).) For example, a location quotient of 2.0 indicates that an occupation accounts for twice the share of employment in the area than it does nationally. In the Fort Smith metropolitan area, above average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers were employed at 11.4 times the national rate in Fort Smith, and slaughterers and meat packers, at 10.6 times the U.S. average. Both location quotients were among the highest in all metropolitan areas for these particular occupations.

These statistics are from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey, a federal-state cooperative program between BLS and State Workforce Agencies, in this case, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services.

Note

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with the ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

Technical Note

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey is a semiannual mail survey measuring occupational employment and wage rates for wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are also surveyed, but their data are not included in the national estimates. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Forms are mailed to approximately 200,000 sampled establishments in May and November each year. May 2014 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2014, November 2013, May 2013, November 2012, May 2012, and November 2011. The overall national response rate for the six panels is 74.3 percent based on establishments and 70.5 percent based on weighted sampled employment. The unweighted employment of sampled establishments across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 57.1 percent of total national employment. (Response rates are slightly lower for these estimates due to the federal shutdown in October 2013.) The sample in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,855 establishments with a response rate of 85 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and 821 detailed occupations for the nation, states, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, and nonmetropolitan areas. In addition, employment and wage estimates for 94 minor groups and 458 broad occupations are available in the national data. OES data by state and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan area are available from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcst.htm and www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcma.htm, respectively.

The May 2014 OES estimates are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system and the 2012 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Information about the 2010 SOC is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/soc and information about the 2012 NAICS is available at www.bls.gov/bls/naics.htm.

Area definitionsThe substate area data published in this release reflect the standards and definitions established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

The **Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** includes Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties in Arkansas, and Le Flore and Sequoyah Counties in Oklahoma.

Additional informationOES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/regions/southwest. Answers to frequently asked questions about the OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm. Detailed technical information about the OES survey is available in our Survey Methods and Reliability

Statement on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/methods_statement.pdf.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2014

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations.....	14,890	2.0	\$14.23	\$29,590
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers.....	950	1.9	22.23	46,250
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers.....	350	2.0	19.04	39,600
Structural metal fabricators and fitters.....	50	0.8	14.40	29,950
Team assemblers.....	1,470	1.6	14.34	29,830
Assemblers and fabricators, all other.....	140	0.7	13.63	28,360
Bakers.....	110	0.8	10.20	21,210
Butchers and meat cutters.....	120	1.0	11.82	24,590
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers.....	1,430	11.4	10.53	21,910
Slaughtering and meat packers.....	770	10.6	8.81	18,330
Food and tobacco roasting, baking, and drying machine operators and tenders.....	(5)	(5)	8.15	16,950
Food batchmakers.....	(5)	(5)	12.40	25,780
Food cooking machine operators and tenders.....	90	2.9	11.11	23,100
Food processing workers, all other.....	410	11.1	9.90	20,590
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic.....	300	2.4	20.34	42,320
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic.....	390	2.4	16.32	33,940
Grinding, lapping, polishing, & buffing machine tool setters, operators, & tenders, metal & plastic.....	40	0.7	(5)	(5)
Machinists.....	220	0.7	18.80	39,100
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic.....	90	0.8	16.18	33,650
Multiple machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic.....	160	2.0	12.72	26,460
Tool and die makers.....	110	1.7	20.17	41,950
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers.....	470	1.5	18.29	38,040
Welding, soldering, and brazing machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	(5)	(5)	16.33	33,960
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic.....	40	2.5	20.28	42,180
Plating and coating machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic.....	(5)	(5)	14.62	30,400
Print binding and finishing workers.....	110	2.6	13.83	28,760
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers.....	160	0.9	9.23	19,190
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials.....	(5)	(5)	8.43	17,520
Sewing machine operators.....	80	0.7	11.60	24,130
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters.....	110	1.5	13.11	27,270
Furniture finishers.....	(5)	(5)	9.94	20,670
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing.....	130	2.2	11.83	24,610
Power plant operators.....	(5)	(5)	30.86	64,180
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators.....	200	2.2	16.35	34,000
Gas plant operators.....	40	3.0	27.83	57,880
Petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers.....	40	1.3	29.60	61,570
Separating, filtering, clarifying, precipitating, and still machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	40	1.1	18.03	37,510
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	(5)	(5)	13.72	28,550
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	220	2.2	15.22	31,660
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	290	5.5	14.15	29,430
Furnace, kiln, oven, drier, and kettle operators and tenders.....	40	2.4	14.23	29,600
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers.....	760	1.9	14.96	31,120
Ophthalmic laboratory technicians.....	50	2.1	15.51	32,260
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders.....	900	2.8	12.04	25,040

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2014 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	110	1.4	15.74	32,730
Cleaning, washing, and metal pickling equipment operators and tenders.....	70	4.9	10.37	21,570
Molders, shapers, and casters, except metal and plastic.....	60	2.0	⁽⁵⁾	⁽⁵⁾
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders.....	80	1.0	15.08	31,360
Helpers-production workers.....	1,370	3.9	10.64	22,130
Production workers, all other.....	⁽⁵⁾	⁽⁵⁾	15.97	33,220

⁽¹⁾ For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Fort Smith MSA, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_22900.htm.

⁽²⁾ Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

⁽³⁾ The location quotient is the ratio of the area concentration of occupational employment to the national average concentration. A location quotient greater than one indicates the occupation has a higher share of employment than average, and a location quotient less than one indicates the occupation is less prevalent in the area than average.

⁽⁴⁾ Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly mean wage by a 'year-round, full-time' hours figure of 2,080 hours; for those occupations where there is not an hourly mean wage published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

⁽⁵⁾ Estimates not released.